

REPORT OF CONSUMER INQUIRIES AND INFORMAL COMPLAINTS
Fourth Quarter, Calendar Year 2014
Top Consumer Issues – Subject Category Reference Guide

BUNDLED AND VoIP SERVICES

Billing and Rates: billing and rates charged for bundled or VoIP services

Broadband Services: high-speed broadband access that is always on and faster than traditional dial-up access. Broadband can be provided over different platforms: Digital Subscriber Line (DSL); Cable Modem; Fiber-Optic Cable (Fiber); Wireless; Satellite; and Broadband over Power Line (BPL)

Carrier Marketing and Advertising: carrier advertising and marketing practices, including alleged misrepresentations

Number Portability: ability to port a telephone number from one service provider to another

Service: quality of service provided

CABLE AND SATELLITE SERVICES

Billing and Rates: billing and rates charged for program service

Broadband: access caps, access speeds, advertisements, availability, billing/rates, equipment, interference, and quality

Cable Card: a plug-in card that allows consumers to view and record digital cable television channels on digital video recorders, personal computers, and televisions without the use of other equipment, such as a set-top box provided by a cable television company

Digital Television: digital TV service or the transition from analog to digital TV

Disability and Access: video description, closed captioning, and emergency access to video programming

Over-The-Air Reception Devices (OTARD): installation, maintenance or use of antennas (including direct-to-home satellite dishes, TV antennas, and wireless cable antennas) used to receive video programming

PEG/Leased Access: public, educational, governmental access channels may be used to transmit government activities, such as city council meetings, which may be of interest to local residents. PEG channels may also be used by members of the general public and for educational purposes

Programming: program content or the choice of channels/programs available to subscribers

Provider Marketing and Advertising: provider advertising and marketing practices, including alleged misrepresentations

Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act (STELA): includes the Satellite Home Viewer Improvement Act of 1999 (SHVIA) and Satellite Home Viewer Extension and Reauthorization Act of 2004 (SHVERA), which was further updated under the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act of 2010

Service: quality of service provided

RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING

Digital Television: digital TV service or the transition from analog to digital TV

Disability and Access: video description, closed captioning, and emergency access to video programming

Interference: reception of unwanted signals from nearby transmitters to home electronic equipment

Programming:

- **Indecency/Obscenity:** obscene, indecent or profane programming
- **Other:** miscellaneous programming issues (*e.g.*, contests and lotteries, freedom of speech, how to start a station, journalism, false information, lists of stations)
- **General Criticism:** non-specific concerns regarding programming content

Service: availability, customer service, interruption in service

Station Marketing and Advertising: station advertising and marketing practices, including alleged misrepresentations

WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Billing and Rates:

- **Airtime Charges:** charges to subscribers for actual time spent using a wireless phone
- **Credit/Refunds/Adjustments:** credits, refunds, or bill adjustments
- **Line Items:** surcharges and taxes appearing on a wireless bill:

- Access Charges: miscellaneous line item charges
 - E-911: provision of automatic location information and automatic number identification via a wireless phone used to contact a 911 call center
 - Taxes: taxes appearing on wireless bill
 - Universal Service Fund: availability and affordability of phone service for low income consumers in geographic areas in which the cost of providing telephone service is high
- **Recurring Charges**: recurring monthly charges that appear on a subscriber's bill
 - **Roaming Rates**: charges assessed to the subscriber for wireless calls made while roaming in another carrier's territory
 - **Rounding**: practice of rounding calls to a full minute
 - **Service Plan Rates** – terms and conditions of service:
 - Activation Fee: usually a one-time charge to initiate service
 - Off-Peak: specified period during which per-minute rate is lower
 - Optional Services: including caller-ID, voice mail, road-rescue
 - Peak: specified time during which per-minute rate is higher
 - Prepaid Service: subscriber pays for service in advance
 - Promo Plan: including minute allowances
 - Security Deposit: usually a one-time charge that is held by the carrier for a specified period required for subscriber to acquire service

Broadband: access caps, access speeds, advertisements, availability, billing/rates, equipment, interference, and quality

Carrier Marketing and Advertising: carrier advertising and marketing practices, including alleged misrepresentations

Contract – Early Termination of Service: termination of a subscriber's service prior to end of specified contract term:

- By Subscriber: subscriber's liability for terminating service prior to end of specified contract term
- By Carrier: carrier's right to terminate a subscriber's service prior to end of specified contract term

Customer Premise Equipment: any terminal and associated equipment located at a subscriber's premises and connected with a carrier's telecommunication channel(s) at the demarcation point ("demarc"). The demarc is a point established in a building or complex to separate customer equipment from telephone company equipment

Equipment (EQUI)

- Equipment Unauthorized Charges (EQUC): subscriber charged for wireless phone without agreeing to purchasing phone
- Faulty Equipment (EFAU): technical or malfunctioning equipment

- Stolen Equipment (ESTO): misuse or reporting problems associated with stolen equipment

General Mobile Information (Land Mobile): wireless microphones, refarming, radar, licensing and operations, inspections, and other related issues

Interference: reception of unwanted signals from nearby transmitters to electronic equipment

License Information (General): General Mobile Radio Services (GMRS) license acquisition, requirements, eligibility, cancellation, frequency coordination, replacement and other related issues

Service: quality of service or the lack of signal coverage within a geographic area served by a wireless provider

- Dead Spots: inability to receive service within certain areas
- Dropped Calls: premature termination of calls
- Home Area Service: overall quality of service within the subscriber's local calling area
- Network Busy Signal: calls that do not go through because of overcrowding of the service frequencies
- Roaming Availability: availability of service outside of the subscriber's local calling area
- Roaming Service: overall quality of service while roaming
- Service Interruption: inability to use wireless phone because service was interrupted by service provider

Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA): compliance with TCPA wireless requirements

Tower: light outages, paint, posting, zoning and registration

911: charge imposed by local governments to help pay for emergency services

WIRELINE TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Billing and Rates:

Credit/Refunds/Adjustments: account credits, refunds or adjustments

Line Items: charges and taxes appearing on a telephone bill:

- Access – Subscriber Line Charge: subscriber local-loop line charges for maintaining residential and business and telephone access to the network
- Access – Universal Service: FCC's universal service fund-affordable access to basic telephone service for low-income consumers and consumers in high-cost

areas, and provision of communications services to schools, libraries and health care facilities

- Interstate Directory Assistance: charges assessed for access to directory assistance information
- Taxes on Telephone Bill: local, state, or federal taxes appearing on a telephone bill
- Truth-in-Billing - No Service Provider ID: the name of the service provider and/or contact information for the service provider is not easily identifiable on the bill
- Truth-in-Billing - Bundled Charges: bill fails to contain plain language description and breakdown of charges for each carrier where multiple carriers appear on the bill
- Truth-in-Billing - No Payment Solution: bill fails to clearly distinguish charges for which nonpayment will result in disconnection from those that will not result in disconnection

Rates: rates and charges billed by telephone companies:

- Double Billing: disputes concerning double billing for calls or services
- DSL Rate Problem: DSL promotional plan rates altered or unspecified to consumer
- International Internet Dial-up: international calls billed to subscriber as a result of using local (domestic) Internet service providers to access websites
- International Calls – Rates: international calls, rates and/or service that either originate or terminate in the U.S.
- 809 International Billing: 809 area code collect call and consumer dialing scams
- 900 Pay-Per-Call Billing: commercially provided interstate 900 number information or entertainment services
- OSP Rates: rates charged for interstate calls placed from public phones
- Rates for Interstate Telecommunications Services – Billing: disputes concerning interstate rates and charges

Cramming: unauthorized, misleading or deceptive charges appearing on a subscriber's bill

Number Portability: ability to port a telephone number from one service provider to another

Recurring Charges: recurring charges that appear on a subscriber's bill

Service Quality: quality of service provided by carrier:

- DSL Service Inadequate: poor quality of service or service outages
- Interstate Telecommunications: poor call reception, service outages, service disconnects, or carrier's failure to release telephone line (and no charges are associated)

- Long Distance Service Treatment: inadequate customer service treatment by long distance carriers including, but not limited to, additional services being added without the consumer's knowledge or approval

Slamming: practice of changing a subscriber's telecommunications service provider (or a calling plan) without the subscriber's consent

- International slammed: changing a subscriber's international long distance service without permission
- Local Service slammed: changing a subscriber's local or regional intrastate long distance service without permission
- Local and Long Distance slammed: changing a subscriber's local and long distance service without permission
- Long Distance slammed: changing a subscriber's interstate telephone company service without permission
- Slamming w/ Problem LOA: changing a subscriber's interstate telephone company based on fraudulent signed documents or illegal formats, such as sweepstakes

Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) – compliance with TCPA:

- Do Not Call List: any telephone solicitation to a residential telephone subscriber who has requested not to receive telephone solicitations
- Unsolicited Fax: unsolicited (“junk”) faxes or the use of a computer or other device to send any messages via a telephone facsimile
- Other: other aspects of TCPA (*e.g.*, prerecorded messages, abandoned calls and war dialing, business telephone complaints, emergency telephone complaints, call or message to wireless device, and/or call or message to toll free numbers)

Universal Service Fund Issues: contribution methodology, general information, rural health care and calculation increases

911: charge imposed by local governments to help pay for emergency services

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Note: During the fourth quarter of 2014, the FCC began to test its new Consumer Help Center, with increasing percentages of complaints being directed to the new Consumer Help Center portal over time. The test period began October 31 and ended December 29, 2014, with the launch of the new Consumer Help Center. Initially the percentage of complaints routed to the Consumer Help Center ranged from 20 to 30 percent. That percentage reached 100 percent shortly before the launch of the new system in late December. As a result, consumer complaints for the fourth quarter 2014 were received by both the legacy complaint system as well as the new Consumer Help Center. The Quarterly Report for fourth quarter 2014 includes only those complaints filed in the legacy complaint system. Data for complaints filed in the new Consumer Help Center during the test period can be found at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>.